The Benefits of Wine

While many people are aware of the protective cardiovascular benefits of red wine, fewer are aware of the several other potential health benefits as well. Continuing research efforts are aimed at further understanding these benefits, many of which are believed due to the presence of the antioxidant resveratrol in wine. While both white and red wines contain resveratrol, red wine has much more, due to high levels in the skin of red grapes. Also referred to as polyphenols, resveratrol is thought to protect cells and tissues against damage that can lead to the development of diseases such as cancer and heart disease.

The official consensus recommendation is that to enjoy these potential health benefits, any alcohol consumption should be in moderation — up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. Consuming larger quantities can lead to numerous health problems, such as cancer and heart disease.

1. Memory Improvement and Prevention of Dementia
Red wine may help prevent age-related memory decline and dementia. This is due to the effects from resveratrol, which can help prevent clots and reduce blood vessel inflammation, both of which have been linked to cognitive decline. An encouraging study at Georgetown University showed that resveratrol slowed the progression of Alzheimer’s in affected patients.

2. Weight Loss
Alcohol may encourage your body to burn extra calories for as long as 90 minutes after consumption. Researchers recently showed that by giving mice resveratrol, they converted excess white fat to calorie-burning brown fat.

3. Protection from Infection
In a study, consuming one glass of wine per day reduced the risk of infection by Helicobacter pylori bacteria, which can cause gastritis, ulcers, and stomach cancer. A separate study from Spain showed that wine might protect against food poisoning caused by germs like salmonella after exposure to contaminated food.

4. Improvement of Cholesterol
Alcohol has been shown to raise high-density lipoprotein (HDL), the so-called good cholesterol, which helps unclog your arteries. This is one way that wine is believed to help prevent cardiac disease.

5. Strengthen Bones
Wine may increase bone mineral density in women, perhaps due to alcohol’s effect on boosting estrogen levels. However, this was a short-term study, and long-term effects are not known.

6. Protect Against Certain Cancers
Being an antioxidant, resveratrol may prevent head and neck cancer by killing damaged cells. Another study published in 2014 found that increased polyphenols in wine, particularly resveratrol, also protected against colon cancer. It is important to note however, that excessive intake of alcohol has been linked to several types of cancer.

7. Dental Protection
Studies in Italy have shown that polyphenols help prevent the bacteria Streptococcus mutans, which causes dental caries, from sticking to saliva and teeth. On the contrary, an Australian study showed that acid from wine could also increase wear of tooth enamel.

8. Blood Sugar Regulation
Research at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst indicates that red wine may help to regulate blood sugar in patients with Type 2 Diabetes. Laboratory studies showed that polyphenols in red wine helped to inhibit an enzyme that is responsible for glucose absorption into the bloodstream.

9. Anti-Aging Benefits
While many people believe that wine helps to slow the aging process, this is still a matter of debate. Resveratrol has been shown to favorably modulate the expression of PPARα, a transcription factor that regulates the gene expression of lipoprotein lipase, which in turn regulates the lipid profile.

But just as with any other potential health benefit, more research is needed to fully understand the complexities of these findings and whether they translate into real-world applications. As always, it is important to remember to enjoy wine in moderation.